

24 December 1958

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

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PL
Watch Committee conclusion -- Berlin/Taiwan Strait:
No Sino-Soviet bloc country intends deliberately to initiate direct military action against US forces abroad, US allies, or areas peripheral to the orbit in the immediate future.

No significant changes were noted during the past week in either the Berlin or the Taiwan Strait situations.

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

PD
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Watch Committee conclusion -- Middle East: A deliberate initiation of large-scale hostilities in the Middle East is unlikely in the immediate future. The situation, however, remains precarious throughout the area, particularly in Iraq, Jordan, and along the Syrian-Israeli border. [redacted]

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PD
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UAR: In the course of his 23 December speech celebrating the second anniversary of the Anglo-French evacuation of Suez, Nasir charged the Communist party in Syria with opposing Arab nationalism and Arab unity and said that the "force of the Arab people" had compelled Communists and "opportunist" to "hide in their holes." This is Nasir's first personal public attack on the Communists, and may signal a new drive to suppress their activity in the UAR as well as a stronger effort to limit Communist influence elsewhere in the Arab world.

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[redacted]

PD
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Jordan: Prime Minister Rifai says he intends to resign next April in order to run the government from behind the scenes. King Husayn, however, may be planning changes earlier and is considering naming one or two "liberal" politicians to the cabinet. Husayn appears increasingly restive in view of what he considers his country's basically untenable position as an island of Western influence surrounded by hostile governments. [redacted]

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DAILY BRIEF

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Nationalist China: Chiang Kai-shek's announcement that he will not seek re-election to the presidency of Nationalist China in 1960 does not mean that he will abandon his leadership of the ruling Kuomintang party, the real basis for his control of state affairs. A primary reason for his decision is the difficulty of changing the constitutional prohibition against a third term. If a solution to this problem can be found, he may reconsider. If he does step down, Vice President Chen Cheng would probably succeed Chiang as president.

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

Developments in Jordan

King Husayn is again planning to replace the cabinet of Samir Rifai with a less unpopular government. Although the King is under no illusion that any new government--to be selected primarily from among Jordan's old-line politicians--would be an improvement, he feels that change is desirable for psychological reasons. Premier Rifai [redacted]

25X1 [redacted] planned to resign in April; the King, however, presumably contemplates an earlier cabinet reshuffle and is considering the inclusion of one or two politicians more "liberal" in outlook. 25X1

The King is considering asking Senate President Said Mufti, a supporter of Rifai, to form the new cabinet. Rifai hopes to replace Mufti as president of the Senate and is confident that he can continue to run the government from behind the scenes. He wishes to have his brother, Abd al-Munim Rifai, appointed foreign minister in the new government. The premier is also defense minister and foreign minister, and his claim that he needs a rest has good basis in fact as he has had several mild heart attacks.

Rifai's government has become so unpopular that it is in many ways a liability to the monarchy. The regime is blamed for deteriorating economic conditions, and Rifai's army reorganization program has offended Bedouin elements in the army and government, upon whom the monarchy has relied for its principal support. The King risks further opposition from the Bedouins if he retains Rifai. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted]

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25X1 [redacted]

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Chiang Kai-shek Announces He Will Not Seek Third Term

Chiang Kai-shek announced on 23 December before a meeting of the Mainland Recovery Planning Board, a group composed chiefly of Kuomintang party members, that he would not seek re-election to the presidency of Nationalist China in 1960 when his second term expires. A third term would require a constitutional amendment which would arouse opposition from liberal elements on Taiwan. Presumably, Chiang believes he could continue to control the state effectively from his equally important post as leader of the ruling Kuomintang party.

Vice President Chen Cheng would be Chiang's logical successor. Chen is a long-time associate in whom Chiang has confidence, and his designation as the official Kuomintang candidate would be tantamount to election.

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